

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8511
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USLOF PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 4941

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IR, AF, PK
SUBJ: VISIT TO ZAHEDAN

1. ON MAY 22, I VISITED ZAHEDAN, CAPITAL OF THE BALUCHISTAN PROVINCE, WHICH IS LOCATED IN THE NEXUS OF THE IRANIAN, AFGHAN, AND PAKISTAN FRONTIERS. DURING MY VISIT THERE, AT A LUNCHEON ARRANGED BY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL, I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO FEEL THE PULSE OF THE LOCAL GENTRY IN THE WAKE OF THE RECENT COUP IN KABUL.

2. IN GENERAL, I FOUND THEM ALL RATHER WORRIED, BUT FAR FROM PANICKY, ABOUT THEIR FUTURE. SINCE MOST OF THE OFFICIALS ARE EDUCATED IRANIANS FROM OTHER PARTS OF IRAN, THEIR IDENTITY WITH THEIR IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORHOOD IS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN TOTAL, BUT THEY DO SHARE A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS IMPENDING EVENTS.

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3. BY FAR THE MOST NERVOUS MAN I MET WAS THE PAKISTAN CONSUL, AN ENGAGING YOUNG CAREER OFFICER FROM THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER PROVINCE. HE IS FULL OF FOREBODING ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS TO USE AFGHANISTAN AS THE "BEAR'S PAW" IN FOMENTING TROUBLE AMONG THE TRIBES. HE BELIEVES THAT THE FLOOD OF PUSHTOON AND BALUCHI CABLES OF CONGRATULATIONS SENT

TO KABUL WERE FRAUDULENT AND ARE PART OF A SOVIET "BLACK PROPAGANDA" EFFORT.

4. THE HEAD OF THE RASTAKHIZ PARTY, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHO IS AN ARTICULATE, TEHRAN UNIVERSITY-EDUCATED BALUCHI, WAS MORE BALANCED IN HIS APPRAISAL OF THE BALUCHI PROBLEM. HE FELT THE NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT (WHICH HE SAYS CONTAINS FIVE BALUCHI MINISTERS) WILL DIRECT ITS ATTENTION TO ALL BALUCHIS IN PAKISTAN AND IRAN. SINCE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY ARE IN PAKISTAN, THAT IS WHERE HE EXPECTS THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF KABUL'S INTEREST.

5. HE TENDS TO BELIEVE THE CONGRATULATORY CABLES FROM BALUCHIS WERE GENUINE, ALTHOUGH HE THINKS MANY CAME FROM PAKISTAN BALUCHI LEADERS CURRENTLY IN EXILE. HE SAYS THAT SEVERAL OF THE LEADERS FLED DURING THE BHUTTO REGIME AND ARE CURRENTLY IN IRAQ AND IN THE GULF STATES. HE BELIEVES THESE LEADERS WILL BE ATTRACTED TO THE NEW KABUL REGIME AND WILL REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL HANDLING BY ISLAMABAD.

6. HE THOUGHT THAT WALI KHAN MIGHT BE THE KEY TO THE FUTURE OF BALUCHI REGION. IF WALI CAN SATISFY HIS AMBITION TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER OF ALL PAKISTAN, HE MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD THE TRIBAL GROUPS LOYAL TO ISLAMABAD. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, HE IS FRUSTRATED IN THAT AMBITION, HE COULD BE A WILLING TOOL FOR SOVIET-SPONSORED EFFORTS
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AT PARTITION AND SEPARATION.

7. ON THE OFFICIAL LEVEL, THE GOVERNOR GENERAL EXPECTED THINGS TO REMAIN QUIET IN HIS LOCAL RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN. HE SAID THERE WERE VERY FEW AFGHANS EITHER LEGALLY OR ILLEGALLY IN HIS PROVINCE. HIS MAIN CONCERN WAS THE HELMAND RIVER AGREEMENT. IF THE AFGHAN REGIME ABIDES BY THE TERMS OF THE ACCORD, HE HOPES TO DEVELOP SIGNIFICANT AGRICULTURE IN THE SISTAN DISTRICT. IF, AFTER THE NEW DAMS ON THE RIVER ARE COMPLETED, KABUL DECIDED TO CUT OFF THE WATER FLOW TO IRAN, HE EXPECTS TROUBLE. BUT HE SEES THE POTENTIAL FOR THAT ACTION AT LEAST A FEW YEARS IN THE FUTURE.

8. ONE FINAL OBSERVATION. THIS IS MISERABLE TERRITORY AND IT WOULD BE OBVIOUSLY UNWITTING TO ANYONE EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT IT OFFERS AFGHANISTAN (AND HENCE THE SOVIETS) A CORRIDOR TO THE SEA. BUT IT WILL NEVER BE A TEMPTING PARADISE FOR SETTLERS OF ANY ILK.
SULLIVAN

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